

## The development of the French executive: endogenous Americanization

Cristina Bucur and Robert Elgie

School of Law and Government  
Dublin City University  
Dublin 9  
Ireland

robert.elgie@dcu.ie  
00 353 1 700 5895

Keywords: Americanization, France, executive decision-making process, presidential elections, personalization of politics

Abstract: In the context of current debates about the presidentialization and personalization of politics, this review discusses the Americanization of presidential politics in France. Two specific areas are reviewed: the personalization of French presidential elections, and the presidentialization of the executive decision-making process. The discussion focuses on a set of features that are usually associated with the US system, such as the relatively recent adoption of primary elections, the programmatic differences between presidential candidates and their parties, and their increasingly centrist policies. By contextualizing this analysis within the development of the Fifth Republic, we emphasize the endogenous roots of the apparently Americanized practices of the French executive and their full adaptation to the French institutional context.

### INTRODUCTION

The election of Nicolas Sarkozy seemed to mark yet another stage in France's apparently ineluctable process of Americanization. Forty years earlier, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber had warned against *Le défi américain* (Servan-Schreiber,

1967), whereby France and Europe generally, he argued, was in danger of becoming an economic colony of the United States. Four decades later, France elected a President who was proud to be nicknamed 'the American' and whose Americanization was evident from both his 'look' and at least some of his policies (Colombani, 2008). During Sarkozy presidency, there were policy changes that might be deemed consistent with an Americanization narrative, not least the highly symbolic decision to reintegrate France into NATO's military command structure. However, if there were ever any fears that the Sarkozy presidency would result in the final 'Disneyfication' of the French political process, then they can safely be set aside and not just because he failed to win re-election in 2012, losing to a candidate whose campaign was centred on the idea of a 'normal' presidency. Sarkozy's Americanization, like much of the Americanization of the French political process, was mainly epiphenomenal. While, over the years, there has been some more or less overt borrowing from US political life, many of the apparently Americanized practices of the French executive are endogenous to the institutions of the Fifth Republic and the nature of political parties in the country.

In this brief review, we leave aside any discussion of the concept of Americanization, which in a French context usually has a decidedly negative connotation. We merely assume that it comprises some set of features that can reasonably be associated with the US system. Moreover, we leave aside any discussion of the many ways in which France can be said to have Americanized culturally. Instead, we focus merely on the Americanization of presidential politics. In the first part of the review we identify three ways in which there might be said to have been an Americanization of French presidential elections. In the second part, we focus on two ways in which there can be said to have been an Americanization of the French decision-making process. Where appropriate, the apparent Americanization of the process is placed in the context of the development of the Fifth Republic more broadly, stressing the largely domestic origins of any such process.

## **THE PERSONALIZATION OF THE FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

- 'Primary' elections

Recently, there has been a move to what has been called '*primaires à la française*'. These so-called 'primaries' are far removed from their US equivalent. Nonetheless, they represent a change in the way in which parties have chosen their candidates and they bear at least a passing resemblance to the US process. A brief comparison of the Socialist party's procedures for the 1981, 2007 and 2012 elections illustrates the change.

In the run up to the 1981 election there were several potential candidates for the Socialist party (PS). They included François Mitterrand and Michel Rocard. The final selection of Mitterrand was the culmination of internal party manoeuvres that were played out at various party congresses over a prolonged period of time. In particular, at the party congress at Metz in 1979, Rocard officially entered into an alliance with the Pierre Mauroy faction against Mitterrand. This alliance was in turn countered by the latter's agreement with the CERES faction, which ensured that Mitterrand remained as First Secretary. Rocard, who was younger and was often considered a more dynamic figure, subsequently announced that he would be a candidate, but when, in November 1980, Mitterrand himself announced that he would be standing Rocard withdrew. In other words, the key battleground was the control of the party leadership. Failing to win this position, Rocard tried to 'go public' and position himself as the candidate who was most likely to defeat the right. However, when Mitterrand put himself forward, Rocard, lacking the institutional resources of the party, was effectively obliged to stand down.

By contrast, in 2006 the Socialist party agreed to hold a primary-style election to select their candidate (Dolez and Laurent, 2007). There were three contestants: Laurent Fabius, former Prime Minister and former party leader, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, a former Finance Minister, and Ségolène Royal, the president of Poitou-Charentes region and a relative outsider. There was a period of campaigning, during which time there were public debates between the three candidates in a manner that was reminiscent of US contests. The selection process resembled a 'closed' primary election, with only party members being allowed to vote. However, in contrast to the US, it was a one-shot game. In other

words, separate elections were not held over a period of time in the different regions or departments of France to elect delegates to a national selection conference. Instead, there was a single ballot of party members on 16 November 2006 at which Ségolène Royal won 60.7 per cent of the vote. The difference between 1981 and 2006 lies not merely in the mechanics of the process, but also in the fact that Royal's campaign was strengthened by her strategy of building "presidential credibility exogenously" (Ivaldi, 2007: 257). In other words, she adopted the same 'go public' strategy as Rocard, but in an institutional environment that was able to reward such a strategy.

While only party members were allowed to participate in the 1995 and the 2006 primaries, in 2011 the Socialist party opened the candidate selection contest to the general public. This resembled an 'open primary' where all citizens were allowed to vote, but it was still a one-shot game. That said, there was a deliberate desire to open up the nomination process. This is similar to the move towards primaries (both open and closed) in the US in the 1970s and 1980s. The citizen-wide primaries allowed the Socialists to dominate media coverage for several weeks, as they included four television debates and brought two and a half million voters to the polls in both ballots (Kuhn, 2012). However, there is little evidence that the unprecedented mediatization of this type of contest had a significant impact on the personalization of the candidate selection process. Despite the different policy positions articulated by the six candidates who contested the primary, the factional infighting during the 2011 primaries was kept at a remarkable low level compared to the divisive contests that preceded particularly the 2007 election. The Socialist party's unity during the candidate selection process as well as the smooth regrouping of the defeated candidates around the eventual winner may be explained to a certain extent by the need to avoid stirring up any further controversy following Dominique Strauss-Kahn's charge over the Sofitel affair a few months before the primaries were organised (Evans, 2012). However, in contrast to Ségolène Royal's quasi-outsider candidacy in the 2006 primaries (Clift, 2007, p. 284), in 2011 François Hollande was perceived as the least divisive contestant in his own camp and the closest to the overall median voter among all presidential candidates (Lemennicier, Lescieux-

Katir, & Vuillemeys, 2011, pp. 304-305).

Generally, the development of primary-like campaigns in France has gone hand-in-hand with greater internal democracy within the two main parties. The reason for greater internal democracy is the legacy of bitter factional infighting. For example, the Socialist party was irreconcilably divided in the five-year period prior to the 1993 parliamentary election and then in the run up to 1995 presidential election because of the competition to succeed François Mitterrand. The debacle of the 1993 legislative election for the party and the humiliating defeat at the 1994 European election was at least partly the result of public disaffection caused by internal divisions. Thus, it is no coincidence that in 1995 the party chose to 'solve' its internal problems by opening up the selection of its presidential candidate to party members for the first time. The same point applies to the right. Even though the right won the 1995 presidential election, the presence of two gaullist party candidates at the first ballot was traumatic. In 2007, in the context of the first open selection process since 1995, the post-gaullist Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) party decided to widen the selection process to its members, though in the end Nicolas Sarkozy was the only candidate when the vote was finally taken. Following Sarkozy's accession to the presidency, the UMP's internal democratic life was brought to a standstill by the replacement of the party president position with an unelected collegial leadership in charge of the daily management of the party. In exchange of giving up the power to elect their president, the UMP members were guaranteed to have a say on the selection of their party's candidate in the 2012 election. However, the virtual ban on internal competition for the party leadership ruled out the possibility of opening up a race for presidential candidacies. As the UMP steered away from its internal democratic procedures, a genuine primary-like contest could no longer be organized and Sarkozy's investiture in 2012 was rather a formality. Thus, primary-style elections do reflect an Americanization of sorts, but their roots are purely domestic.

- The election campaign

Just as the selection of presidential candidates has been Americanized, so too has

the election campaign. The most obvious manifestation of this development is the holding of huge campaign rallies, complete with cheering, poster-waving crowds, at which candidates deliver speeches by way of hidden teleprompters, speeches that include neat sound bites for the benefit of main evening news programmes. The 2007 presidential election campaign was the first at which candidates used the internet systematically. There was variation in the extent to which and the ways in which the different parties used the internet at this election, but there is no doubt that the two main parties, the PS and the UMP, were very active and the internet sites of both the parties and their candidates registered high 'overall quality' scores (Vaccari, 2008). However, compared to 2007, when Royal used her *Désir d'avenir* website as an effective means to distance herself from the Socialist establishment, the online electoral communication did not serve any other role in 2012 than to complement and reinforce the message put across by candidates and their parties in old and new media alike (Kuhn, 2012). All candidates incorporated new social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, to increase their communication with the citizens, promote voting among young people and stimulate their online interaction and engagement in the campaign. However, the online tools disseminated the same public information and messages put across through traditional media, such as print newspapers, television and radio, without a significant diversification of political content. The Socialist party though, went somewhat further in using US-style methods of mixing online contact and traditional door-to-door canvassing, in an attempt to reduce the number of left-leaning undecided voters. These techniques were inspired by Barack Obama's 2008 campaign and, although used on a much smaller scale, aimed to reach out to minorities and disadvantaged communities and get them to vote.

While it is a moot point as to whether the use of increasingly sophisticated internet techniques represents an example of Americanization, one aspect of campaigning that is very reminiscent of the US case is the presence of televised presidential debates. These have been held at each election since 1974, with the exception of the 2002 election when Jacques Chirac refused to debate with the leader of the extreme-right wing Front national party, Jean-Marie Le Pen. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the debates have been held prior to the second

ballot of the election rather than the first. In other words, they have taken the form of a debate between the two remaining candidates in a manner similar to the US case, rather than a debate between all of the candidates who are standing at the election. In her study of the French debates, Perry (2005: 140) argues that France explicitly imitated the American model in this regard, or at least the 1960 Kennedy /Nixon contest, which was the only US example at that time. However, Perry also argues that France did not import “the *format* of the debate, but rather the *idea* of the debate, and the symbol of democracy that it represents”. By this she means that in the 1970s and 1980s at least the debates in France tended to be genuine head-to-head confrontations in contrast to the US where they were “really joint press conferences” (ibid.). The difference, she claims, is due to France’s political culture and the fact that journalists are generally more deferential to politicians. Whether or not this is the case, one element that the two countries do have in common is that debates rarely change the outcome of the election. In 1974, Giscard d’Estaing’s comment that Mitterrand did not have “*le monopole du cœur*” (a monopoly on compassion) was certainly memorable and may have helped to sway certain centrist voters Giscard’s way. Equally, in 2007 Ségolène Royal came across as slightly petulant in the debate with Sarkozy. In both cases, though, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that the debates were electorally decisive. The same can be said of the 2012 debate. The most memorable moment of the 2012 debate was when François Hollande was asked what type of president he would be if elected. For three minutes, Hollande took the opportunity to list the ways in which his presidency would be different. As President of the Republic, he said, he would not meet the members of the parliamentary majority at the Elysée; he would not classify his prime minister as a ‘collaborator’; he would not try to take care of everything; he would make sure that his behaviour was exemplary at all times; and so on. Each phrase was designed to remind people of the type of president that Sarkozy had been. Remarkably, Sarkozy did not fight back. It is doubtful that Hollande’s intervention had any decisive effect on the outcome of the election. However, the phrases did resonate.

The nature of election campaigning is an area where the more or less conscious adoption of American practices is seen perhaps most clearly. Certainly,

French political advisers have been to the US to witness American-style campaigns and have tried to replicate certain media-centred tactics. Generally, presidential debates included, American observers would be very familiar with French presidential election campaigns. That said, the personalization of the electoral process is hardly surprising. Presidential elections are bound to generate a predominant amount of attention. Therefore, while there has undoubtedly been a borrowing of campaign techniques and practices from the US, they have been adopted in an environment that is institutionally open to such influences.

- Candidates' platforms

In terms of party politics, the gulf between France and the US could hardly be greater. France has a multi-party system, with electorally relevant parties spanning from the extreme-left, in its various manifestations, to the extreme right. Even so, Americanization has affected the partisan element of electoral campaigning in a number of ways. For example, presidential candidates, or at least those from the two most competitive parties, the PS and the UMP, present their own platforms at the election. So, in 1981 Mitterrand famously offered *110 propositions pour la France* and in 1988 he addressed a *Lettre à tous les Français*. In 1995 Jacques Chirac published a book called *La France pour tous*, which served as his *de facto* election programme. In 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy's programme was explicitly personalized, *Mon projet: ensemble tout devient possible*, while in 2012 he published a 34-page *Lettre au peuple français*<sup>6</sup> where he outlined his proposals for a *France forte*. François Hollande also unveiled a personal programme containing *60 engagements pour la France*<sup>7</sup> in 2012. This tradition can cause certain anomalies. In 2006 when Dominique Strauss-Kahn was campaigning to win the PS's nomination and proposing his own policies, he was also a member of the committee that was drafting the party's official programme. One year later, Ségolène Royal's efforts to steer clear from identification with the Socialist party resulted in her pledge to incorporate some of the 150,000 policy proposals that she had invited citizens to submit to her campaign website, *Désir d'avenir*, some of which had been included in her 100-proposal platform. Therefore, the



situation in France is remarkably similar to the US, where parties offer their own official platforms, but where candidates are expected to present their own programmatic vision for the presidency. However, one can hardly notice a growing trend in this direction. For example, as opposed to 2007, the difference between the Socialist candidate's manifesto and the electoral programme presented by his party in the ensuing legislative elections was hardly noticeable in 2012. None of these documents had a comparable sweep or depth with the programme put forward by Mitterrand in 1981 (Hewlett, 2012, p. 9). Both programmes insisted on the need of state-stimulated growth, the increase in the public sector employment, including 60,000 new teaching posts, promised to bring back the age of retirement to 60 years for those who acquired a certain level of pensionable employment, and to renegotiate the EU's new fiscal treaty. The Socialist programme even incorporated Hollande's pledge to introduce a 75 per cent tax for earnings over one million euros, which had not been part of his initial 60 commitments, and added a new 45 per cent tax rate on incomes over 150,000 euros a year.

Another similarity lies in the increasingly centrist policies proposed by the main candidates. A good example in this regard is Jacques Chirac's 1995 election campaign, where he stressed the problem of what he called France's '*fracture sociale*', or 'social divide'. For Chirac, the right's candidate at the second ballot of the election, the remedy was greater state intervention. Another good example is Lionel Jospin's 2002 election campaign. Jospin was the PS's candidate, but he failed to win through to the second ballot, being beaten into third place by Jean-Marie Le Pen. In their study of party platforms at the election, Laver et al (2006) find that Jospin deviated considerably from the PS's policy positions, moving to the centre in an attempt to attract voters. However, the centre was crowded and he failed to win sufficient voters there to compensate for those that he lost on the left as a result of his shift. This accounts for his failure to win through to the second ballot. Nicolas Sarkozy's platform shifts first leftward in the aftermath of his election in 2007, through his *ouverture* policy to left-wing personalities, and then rightward in an attempt to reach out to the far-right voters of the National Front by focusing on protectionist, anti-immigration and anti-euro themes in the last part of his term proved equally unsuccessful to gain the support of the

political centre in the run-off. In 2012, Sarkozy faced a more difficult equation. He was certainly able to gather the votes on the non-centrist right and, while section of the far right, including the leadership, remained resolutely opposed to him, there is good reason to suggest that he did win the support of people who might have voted for the FN. However, for strategic, personal and policy reasons he found it much more difficult to win over centrist voters. In the end, Sarkozy came remarkably close to victory, especially when the opinion polls were showing an easy victory for Hollande for months. The inability to win over enough centrist voters was probably his downfall.

The similarities between French and American campaigning in this regard are noteworthy. However, as before, we should see the developments in France as a result of domestic dynamics rather than any external imposition or explicit adoption. For example, a notable feature of French political parties is their organisational weakness. Particularly on the right, parties change their name and to a lesser extent their policies on a regular basis. The gaullist Rassemblement pour la République party of the late-1970s and 1980s was a vehicle for Jacques Chirac's presidential bids at that time. Similarly, it is no coincidence that the origins of the post-gaullist UMP are to be found in the campaigning for the 2002 presidential election. On the left the Socialist party, founded in 1969/1971, can be considered almost venerable in French terms, but the fact that it was founded in response to the left's disastrous showing at the 1969 presidential election is a sign that its aims were predominantly presidential. In France political parties incarnate a certain heritage. However, the manifestation of that heritage is conjunctural. Presidential elections encourage parties to subordinate established structures for the pursuit of political office. In terms of policies or history, this does not mean that they are empty vessels. However, it does mean that they are open to the personalization of election campaigns. François Hollande's campaign pledge to be a 'normal' president was just an alternative strategy of personalizing his campaign by presenting himself as the opposite of Nicolas Sarkozy, whose aggressive leadership style was deemed inappropriate for the French presidential office. The pursuit of centrist policies can be explained in a similar way. In France no party stands a chance of winning more than 50 per cent of the vote by itself, yet this is what is required to

be elected at the second ballot of the presidential election. Therefore, candidates must build alliances. They need to win the support of their own political camp, but they must also seek out the support of undecided voters, most of whom are located in the centre-ground. Thus, there is an ineluctable centrist logic to campaigning. Jospin's strategic error was that he moved to the centre too quickly. The trick is to appeal to your core support in order to win through to the second ballot but to do so without alienating the support of the centrists so that they can be won over at the decisive second ballot. Jospin may have won over the support of some centrists at the first ballot but he allowed his core vote to be dispersed among other left-wing candidates, thereby leaving room for Le Pen to win through to the second ballot. In other words, Jospin lost not because he embraced any process of Americanization too closely, but because he failed to appreciate the institutional logic of the system in which he was operating. History did not repeat itself in 2012. François Hollande emerged as the candidate most likely to maximize the centre-right support in the run-off even before the Socialist primaries were held the previous year (Lemennicier et al., 2011, p. 305). In addition, the programmatic cohesion between his 60 commitments and the electoral programme of the Socialist Party, as well as the party's remarkable unity behind their candidate prevented the dispersion of his electorate among the other left-wing parties in the first round (Evans, 2012, p. 125).

## **THE PRESIDENTIALIZATION OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

- The president's staff

In one sense, the presidential staffs in France and the US have little in common. In France, the president has a chief of staff, the Secrétaire général de la présidence, as well as a head diplomatic adviser, advisers with responsibility for groups of policy areas, plus individual advisers for specific policy domains. However, there is no US-style presidential press secretary. Moreover, the French equivalent of the White House Office is generally much smaller than its US counterpart. Certainly, the size of the president's staff has increased over the course of the Fifth Republic (Elgie, 2000). Under de Gaulle there were around 20-

25 members of the president's civil staff, plus an additional 15-20 members of the military staff. By contrast, under President Sarkozy there were 48 members of the civilian staff and approximately 10-15 members of the military staff. François Hollande's staff counted roughly the same number of civilian staff, around 40 members, and slightly fewer members of the military staff, with just nine advisors. Clearly, though, the French president has fewer advisors than the US president. In addition, while the White House Office incorporates a much broader set of institutions in the form of the Executive Office of the Presidency, in France the equivalent institutions, where they exist at all, are usually found under the authority of the prime minister, who as head of government has, constitutionally, the administration at his disposal (Art. 20). In this sense, therefore, there has been little Americanization of the French presidency.

In another sense, though, the ubiquitousness of the president's advisers in the decision-making process renders the net effect of the president's influence on the executive decision-making process as great in France as in the US. Outside cohabitation, the president's advisers attend all levels of meetings from the purely preparatory to final arbitration meetings. This means that the president's staff and, by extension, the president, are aware of any issues that are arising and are in a position, if necessary, to make the president's position clear. Indeed, the influence of the president's advisers extends beyond internal decision-making meetings. Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, the son of François Mitterrand, was the president's adviser for African affairs from 1986-1992. In this capacity, he obtained the nickname 'papamadi' ('papa m'a dit', or 'daddy told me') for the manner in which he communicated his father's wishes to African leaders in his meetings with them. The active involvement of the presidential staff in the running of the cabinet reached an unprecedented level during Sarkozy's term. The cabinet ministers and even the prime minister were relegated to a secondary role in the negotiation of key reform, while presidential advisors, such as Raymond Soubie, were in charge of negotiations with the social partners and made sure that the president's point of view prevailed (Bouilhaguet, 2009, p. 75). This explains why Alain Juppé conditioned his return to the ministry of foreign affairs in 2011 on the removal of Claude Guéant's tight grip over this policy area. As a result, the secretary general of the Élysée Palace replaced Brice Hortefeux,

one of Sarkozy's closest collaborators, at the ministry of interior. In addition to their close association with the executive decision-making process, key presidential advisors, such as Henri Guiano, were also encouraged to take public opportunities to explain the government's economic programme or the G20 agenda under the French presidency. Upon his accession to the presidency, François Hollande committed to 'normalize' the functioning of the presidential administration as well. As a result, presidential advisors were no longer required to take an active role in the formulation and negotiation of policies and were forbidden to present cabinet decisions to the media or to make any public appearance that could outshine the ministers' primary role in the policy-making process. Additionally, Hollande decided to break off with his predecessors' tradition of appointing an official spokesperson of the Elysée Palace.

In this way, the operation of the president's staff is a key part of the presidentialization of the French system. It is a very practical way in which the president's constitutional authority, which is relatively limited, is transformed into a much greater political authority. As in the US, there is the expectation that the president should be responsible for the running of the country. By the same token, also as in the US, when there is a problem then it is assumed that the president is to blame. For example, Prime Minister Fillon's poll ratings remained higher than President Sarkozy's for most of the 2007-2012 period. The president's staff members are a key part of the transmission mechanism that makes the president responsible for policy decisions. This situation is remarkably similar to the situation in the US, but, as before, it flows from the endogenous expectation of presidential leadership in the French system and not from any process of political mimetism.

- Foreign and defence policy and nuclear weapons

In the US the president has the power of the sword and Congress has the power of the purse. In France the government has the power of the purse too. However, a similarity between the two countries is the extent to which the chief executive is responsible for foreign policy and, particularly, defence policy making. The notion of foreign and defence policy making as the '*domaine réservé*' of the

president dates back to the very beginning of the Fifth Republic. For example, the onset of the Fifth Republic coincided with France's acquisition of nuclear weapons. Even though constitutionally the prime minister is responsible for national defence (Art. 21), the president was placed in charge of the committee that was responsible for operational policy. While the presidentialization of the foreign and defence policy making is decidedly American in this regard, the motivation for it lies less with a desire to import a particular way of dealing with decision making in this sector and much more with the personal desire of de Gaulle, a president and a general, to take control of this sector in order to re-establish France's position of *grandeur* on the world stage.

That said, recently there has been what appears to be a much more deliberate Americanization of the French system in this domain with the creation in December 2009 of a Conseil de défense et de sécurité nationale (Council of Defence and National Security).<sup>v</sup> The idea for this organisation can be found with candidate Sarkozy's call for the creation of a Conseil de sécurité nationale (National Security Council) in April 2007.<sup>v</sup> However, the new Council also subsumed the Conseil de sécurité intérieure (Council for Homeland Security), which was created by President Chirac in 2002 as a deliberate response to the attacks of 11 September 2001. In other words, the motivation for the creation of the new Council can be traced directly back to events that afflicted the US rather than France. Moreover, the aim of the new Council is to coordinate all aspects of security policy, ranging from France's nuclear deterrent to the terrorist threat and including economic and energy security. In this way, the new Council closely follows the model created by President Obama in May 2009 when he merged the White House staff working in the area of national security and homeland security, creating a new National Security Staff.<sup>vi</sup>

This example neatly illustrates the general issues surrounding the Americanization of the French executive. The basic motivation behind the presidentialization and, hence, apparent Americanization of policy-making in the foreign and defence policy sector was endogenous to the situation in which France found itself in the early 1960s. The country had to adapt its decision-making structures now that it was a nuclear power and it did so in the context of a new political system at the head of which was a president and former general

with a very particular vision of France and its place in the world. The result was a decision-making process that had some of the hallmarks of the US system about it. A half a century later, France faces a different challenge. The response to this challenge has been to adopt an institution that seems to bear many of the hallmarks of the equivalent institution(s) in the US. Yet, is the resulting institution really an example of Americanization? Arguably, both France and the US share similar threats to their national security. Unsurprisingly, therefore, both countries have responded in similar ways to this threat.

## CONCLUSION

There is a common belief that culturally France is becoming Americanized. There is also a belief that the personalization of electoral politics and the presidentialization of executive politics is creating a more Americanized political process. Undoubtedly, these characteristics are identifiable in the French case. Indeed, some elements date back to the very beginning of the Fifth Republic in 1958. Seemingly, France was an 'early adopter'. That said, the origins of France's Americanization are largely endogenous. The institutions of the Fifth Republic have encouraged a particular style of politics and French political parties, so different from their US counterparts in many respects, have helped to reinforce the institutional trends of the last half-century. What is more, France and the US increasingly share increasingly common challenges. The French response to these challenges, mediated through the domestic institutional structure and party system, has resulted in aspects of the political process that resemble those in the US. If this is Americanization, then primarily it is an endogenous manifestation of it.

## Notes

---

<sup>i</sup> In a CBS '60 Minutes' documentary broadcast in October 2007 Sarkozy states "I am proud of this nickname".

See [www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/10/26/60minutes/main3416097.shtml](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/10/26/60minutes/main3416097.shtml). Accessed 14 October 2010.

<sup>ii</sup> Available at: <http://http5.europe1.yacast.net/europe1video/PDF/lettre-aux-francais-2012.pdf>. Accessed 14 October 2010.

<sup>iii</sup> Available at [http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2012/article/2012/01/26/francois-hollande-annonce-60-engagements-pour-la-france\\_1634584\\_1471069.html](http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2012/article/2012/01/26/francois-hollande-annonce-60-engagements-pour-la-france_1634584_1471069.html). Accessed 14 October 2010.

<sup>iv</sup> Décret no 2009-1657 du 24 décembre 2009 relatif au conseil de défense et de sécurité nationale et au secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale.

<sup>v</sup> Available at: <http://www.iris-france.org/docs/pdf/conseil-securite-national.pdf>. Accessed 14 October 2010.

<sup>vi</sup> See [www.govexec.com/pdfs/052609m1a.pdf](http://www.govexec.com/pdfs/052609m1a.pdf). Accessed 14 October 2010



## References

- Bouilhaguet, A. (2009) *La carpe et le lapin*, Paris: Editions du Moment.
- Clift, B. (2007). 'The Ségolène Royal Phenomenon: Political Renewal in France?', *The Political Quarterly*, 78(2), 282–291.
- Colombani, J-M. (2008), *Un Américain à Paris*, Paris. Plon.
- Dolez, B., and Laurent, A. (2007) 'Une primaire à la française. La désignation de Ségolène Royal par le parti socialiste', *Revue française de science politique* 57(2): 133-162.
- Elgie, R. (2000) 'Staffing the summit: France', in B. G. Peters, R.A.W. Rhodes and V. Wright (eds.), *Administering the Summit: Administration of the Core Executive in Developed Countries*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 225-244.
- Evans, J. (2012) 'Normalising the French presidency: explaining François Hollande's victory', *Renewal*, 20(2/3), 123–129.
- Hewlett, N. (2012) 'Voting in the Shadow of the Crisis. The French Presidential and Parliamentary Elections of 2012', *Modern & Contemporary France*. doi:10.1080/09639489.2012.721184
- Ivaldi, G. (2007) 'Presidential Strategies, Models of Leadership and the Development of Parties in a Candidate-Centred Polity: The 2007 UMP and PS Presidential Nomination Campaigns', *French Politics* 5(3): 253-277.
- Kuhn, R. (2012) 'The Media and the 2012 Presidential Election', *Modern & Contemporary France*. doi:10.1080/09639489.2012.720054
- Laver, M., Benoit, K., and Sauger, N. (2006) 'Policy competition in the 2002 French legislative and presidential elections', *European Journal of Political Research* 45: 667–697.
- Lemennicier, B., Lescieux-Katir, H., & Vuillemeys, G. (2011) 'Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the best Socialist candidate of them all? The left-right location of the candidates in the Socialist Party primary and the probability of Socialist success in the presidential elections of 2012', *French Politics*, 9(4), 299–316.
- Perry, S. (2005) 'Presidential debates in France: An example of Americanisation?' in E. Godin and T. Chafer (eds.), *The French Exception*, New York: Berghahn, pp. 139-150.
- Servan-Schreiber, J-J. (1967), *Le défi américain*, Paris: Denoël.

Vaccari, C. (2008) 'Surfing to the Elysée: The Internet in the 2007 French Elections', *French Politics* 8(1): 1-22.